

# Good Neighbor Environmental Board Meeting

## May 5, 2022



**Environmental Justice, Border Water and Wastewater Infrastructure for  
Colonias,  
by**

**Dr. Carlos A. Rincon, Director  
EPA-R6 US-Mexico Border Office**

# The U.S. – Mexico Border Region as per the “1983 La Paz Agreement”.- 62.13 (100Kms) Miles north and south of the border: 124.7 Miles (200KM)



## BORDER REGION FACTS

### ■ 10 States:

- California
- Baja California
- Arizona
- Sonora
- New Mexico
- Chihuahua
- Texas
- Coahuila
- Nuevo Leon
- Tamaulipas

### ■ 15 pairs of Sister Cities:

- San Diego–Tijuana
- Calexico–Mexicali
- Yuma–San Luis Colorado
- Nogales–Nogales
- Naco–Naco
- Douglas–Agua Prieta
- Columbus–Las Palomas
- El Paso–Sunland Park– Ciudad Juarez
- Presidio–Ojinaga
- Del Rio–Cuidad Acuna
- Eagle Pass–Piedras Negras

- Laredo–Nuevo Laredo
- McAllen–Reynosa
- Weslaco–Rio Bravo
- Brownsville–Matamoros

### ■ 25 U.S. Counties

### ■ 35 Mexican Municipalities

### ■ 26 U.S. Federally recognized Tribes

# Colonias an Environmental and Social Justice focal point

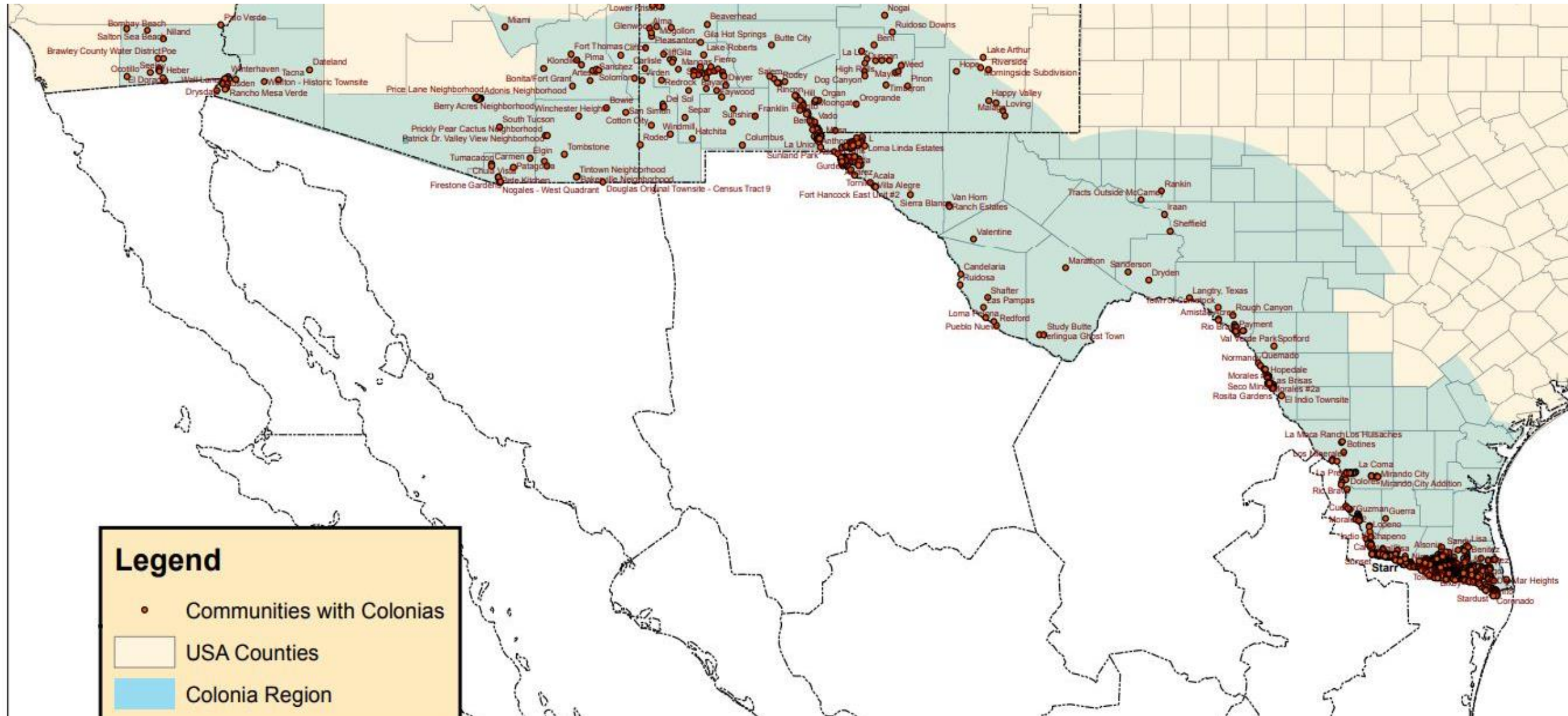
## **Social connotation**

- A subdivisions that started as clusters of makeshift houses and mobile homes—often with only a few dozen residents, offering people, the possibility of land and homeownership,
- Hundreds of Colonias soon sprang up along the Mexican border from Texas to California, to more than 2,200 of them,
- Lots were often sold using unscrupulous contract-for-deed arrangements,
- The contract-deed, often leave them without a legal title for their small, unimproved lots of land without electricity, gas, public services and indoor plumbing

## **Environmental Justice**

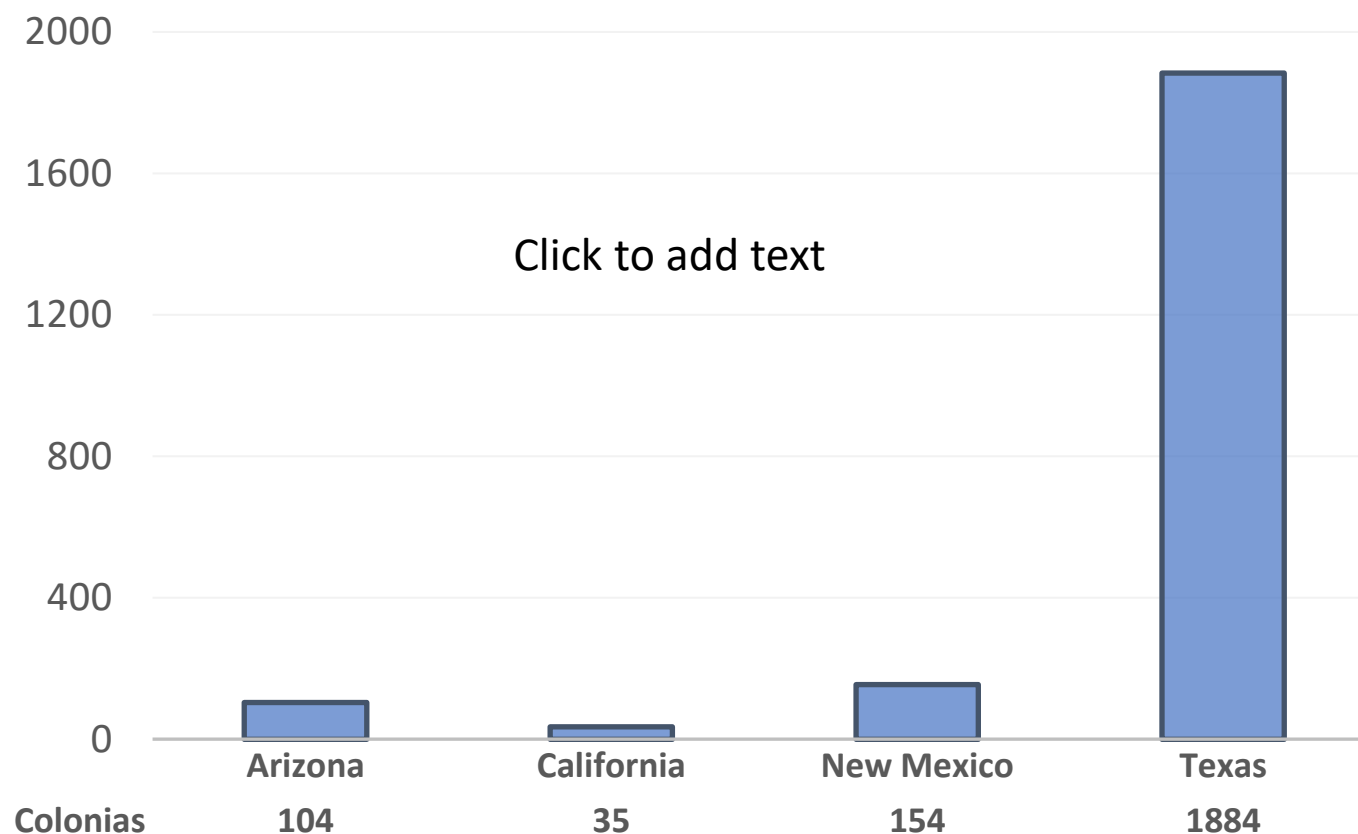
- Colonias are substandard housing developments, found along the US-Mexico border, where residents lack safe, sanitary housing without basic services such as waste management, drinking water, sewage treatment, paved roads, proper drainage that suffer from associated issues like flooding,
- Where sewer systems do exist, there are no treatment plants in the area, and untreated wastewater is at best discharged to low efficient high-cost maintenance “Septic Tanks”

# Border Colonias and Communities within U.S. States



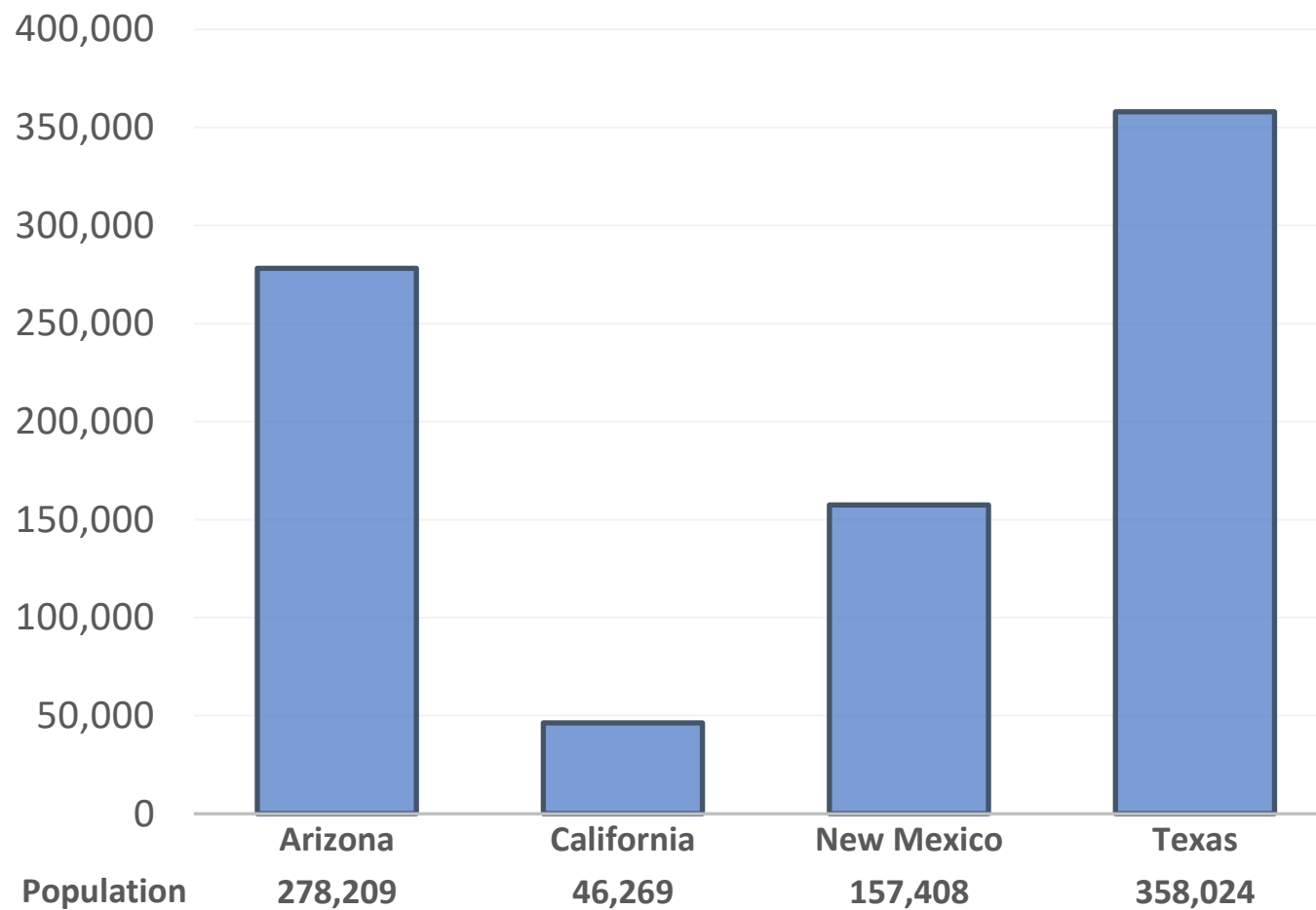


# Colonias per State



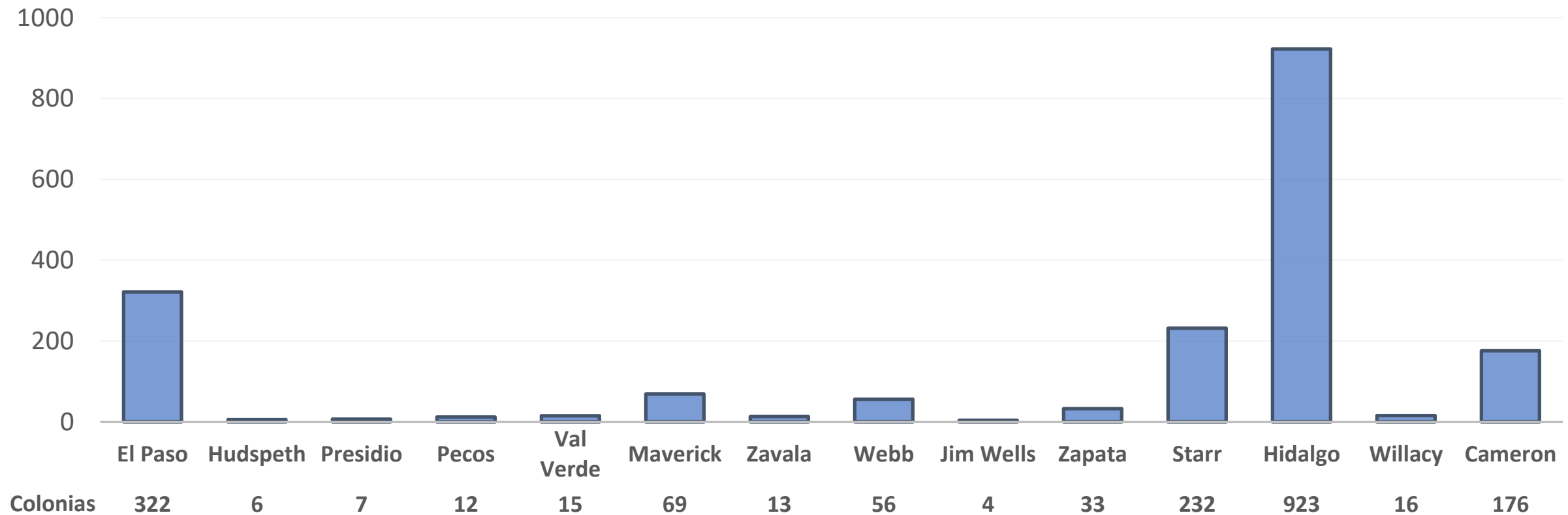


# Colonia Population per State





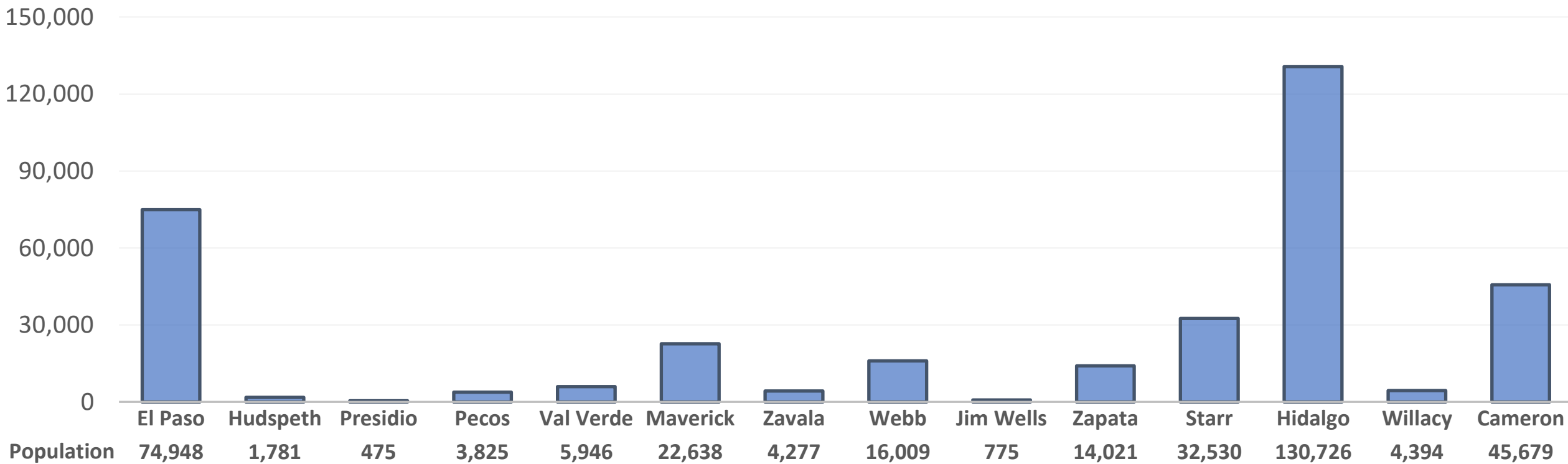
# Colonias per TX County







# Colonia Population per TX County





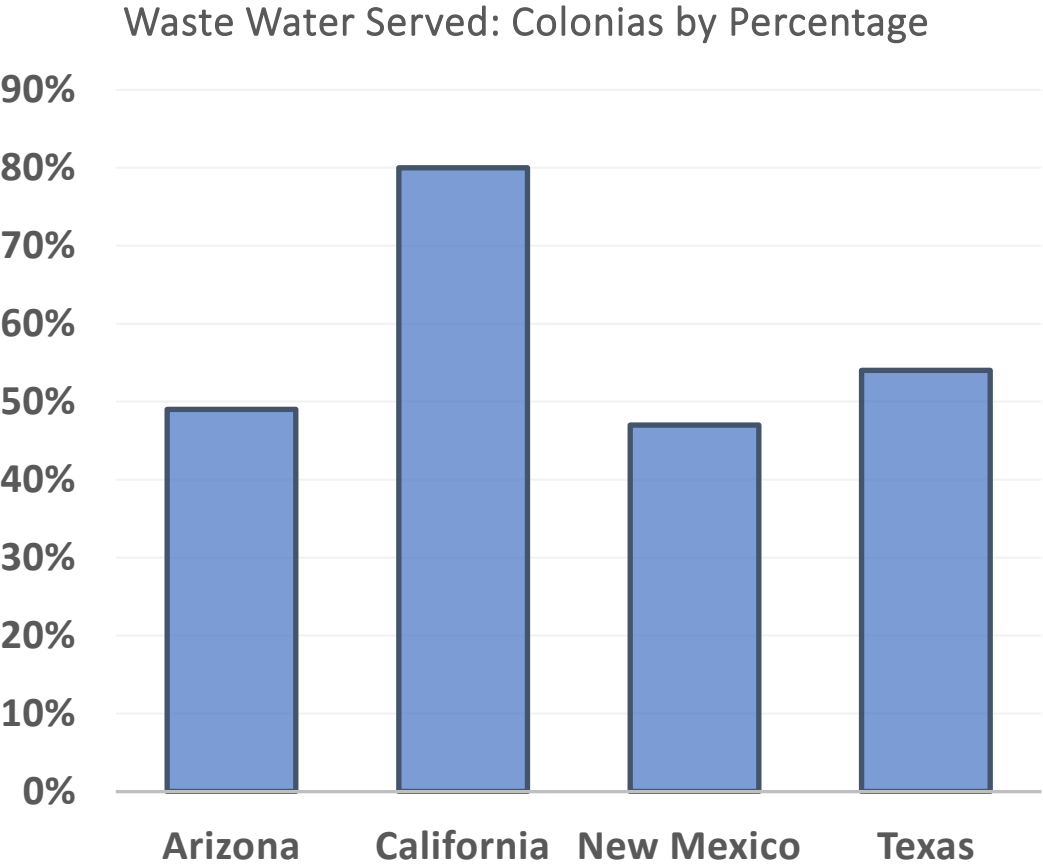
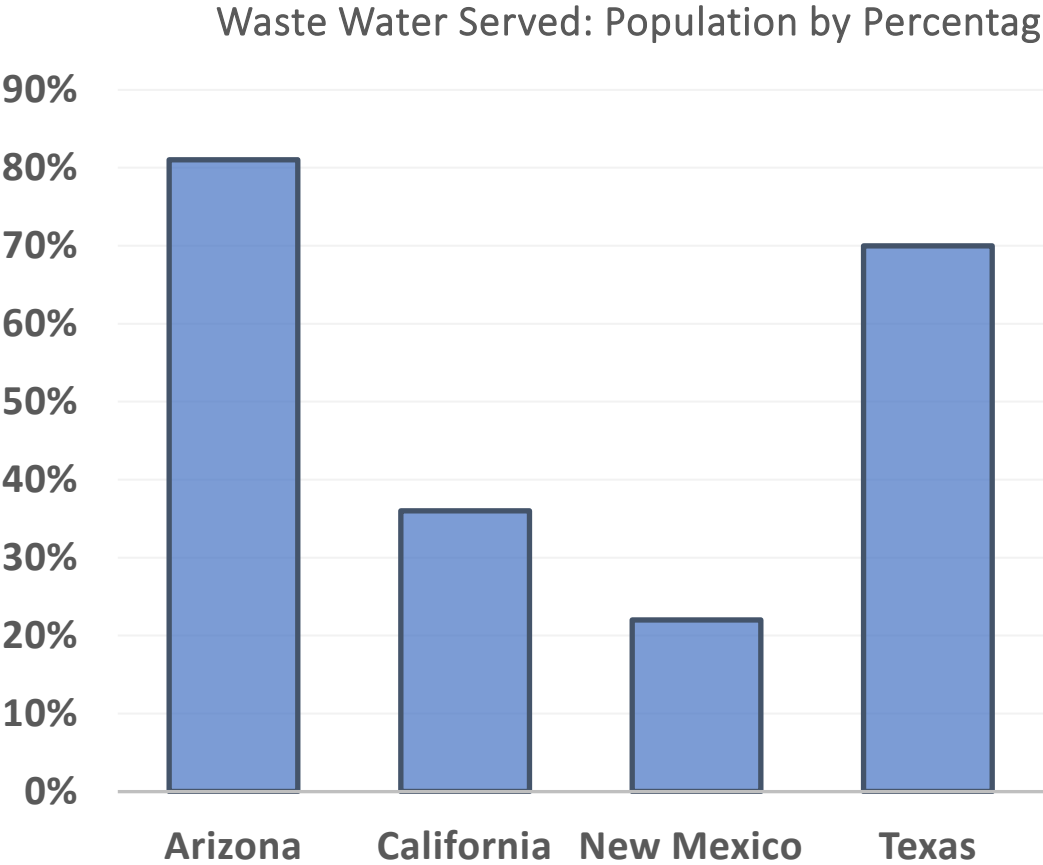
# Clarification and Prioritization of Colonias by Need

**TABLE 1: PRIORITY SCORE DEFINITIONS**

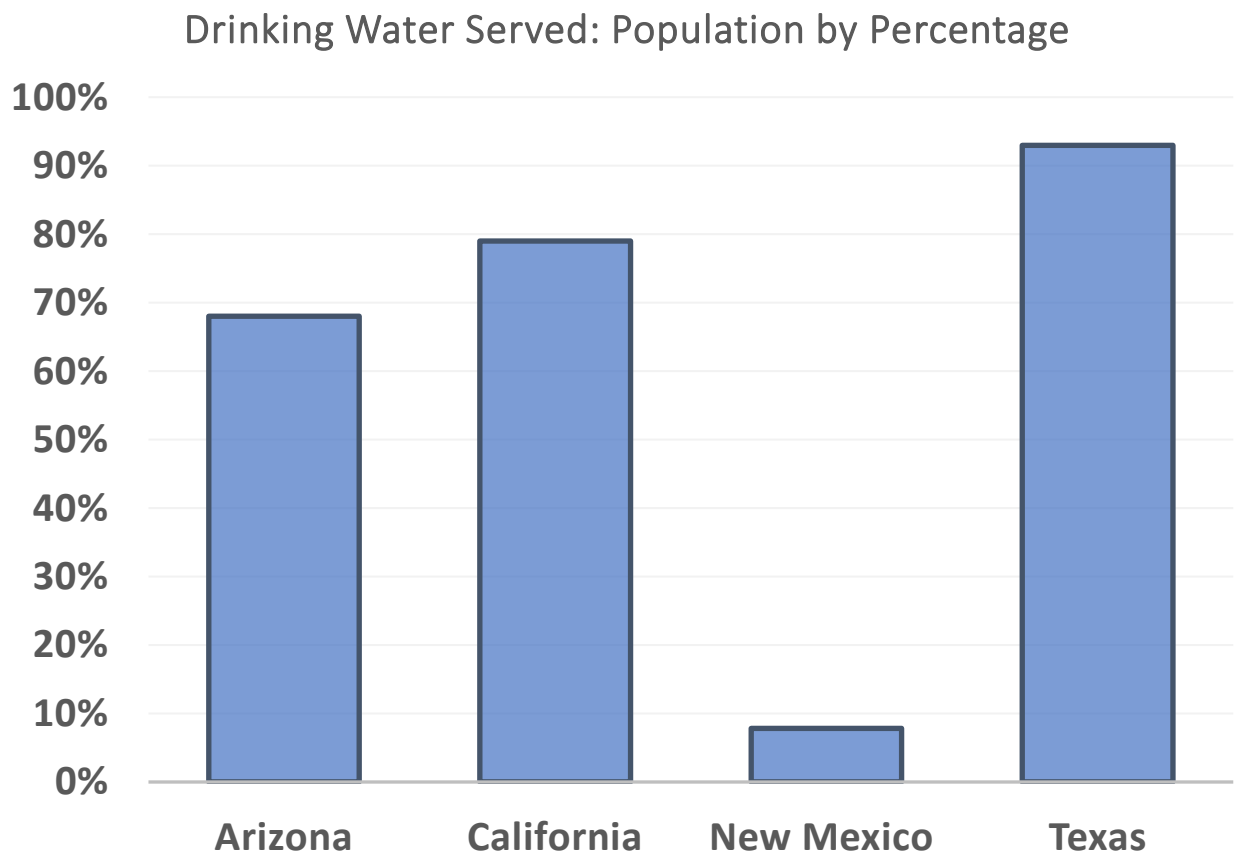
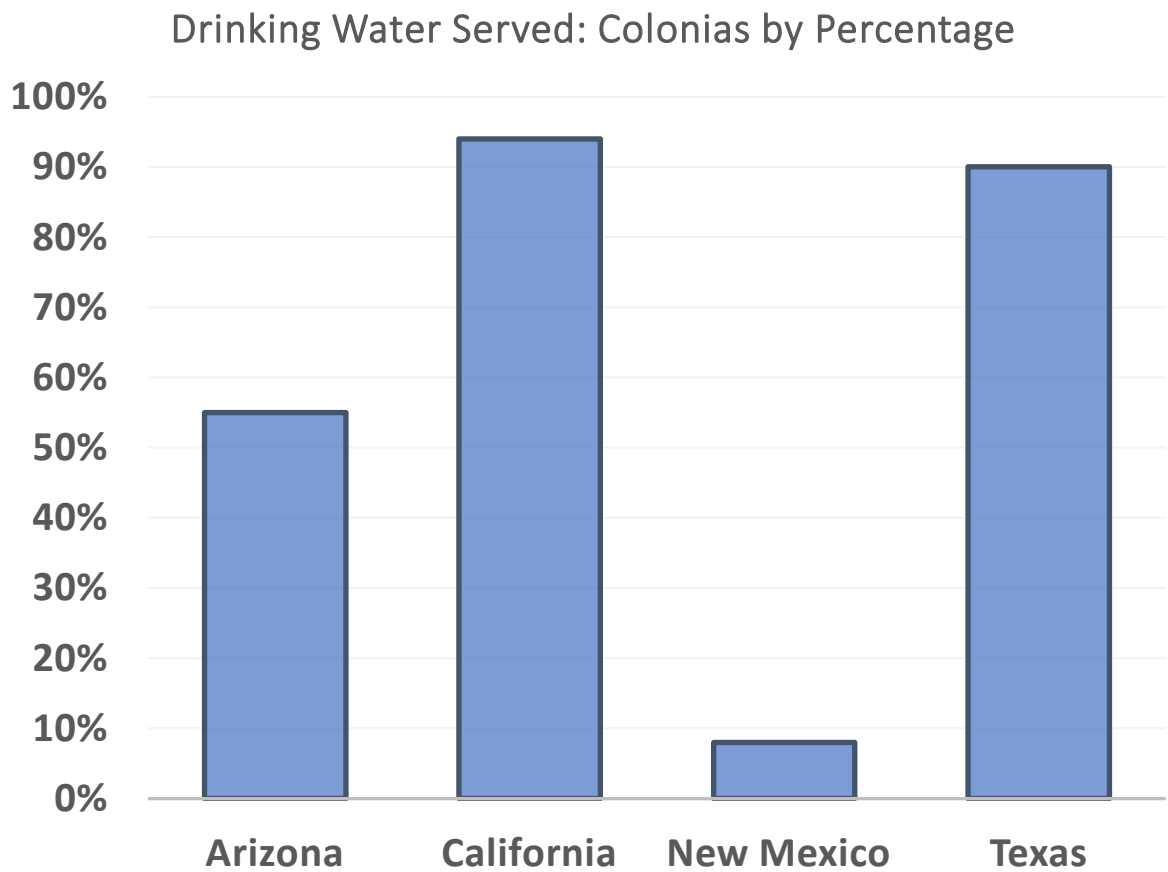
*Highest to lowest order of need*

<b>PRIORITY 1</b>	Communities NOT served by a public water and/or wastewater facility AND A health hazard is (or may) be present
<b>PRIORITY 2</b>	Colonia residents are NOT served by a public water system —no health hazard indicated OR Colonia residents are NOT served by a publicly owned wastewater disposal system, and existing onsite wastewater treatment system is not adequate—no health hazard indicated OR Colonia residents ARE served by publicly owned water and wastewater facilities but one or both are in serious violation of regulations
<b>PRIORITY 3</b>	Some residents are NOT served by a publicly owned water AND/OR Some residents do NOT have access to wastewater service AND Plans are in development and proceeding for financing new water or wastewater services to all areas affected or are currently under construction
<b>PRIORITY 4</b>	Residents ARE served by public water facilities AND Residents are NOT served by public wastewater service, BUT Individual onsite wastewater disposal systems appear to be adequate OR Residents ARE served by BOTH public water service and publicly owned wastewater facilities
<b>PRIORITY 5</b>	The identified colonia does not have any occupied residences, i.e. there are no inhabitants

# Wastewater Served: Colonias by Percentage and Population by Percentage



# Drinking water Served: Colonias by Percentage and Population by Percentage



# EPA Historical Colonia Wastewater Treatment Assistance Program (CWTAP), Border Environment Infrastructure (BEIF), and Border 2025 association with Colonia Water & Wastewater Program

## **Background:**

- CWTAP received \$300 million between FY93 –FY98; The few projects funded were to be closed by 2012
- Projects in unincorporated Colonias;
- Counties within 100 Km (62 miles) of the Texas/Mexico international boundary;
- Eligible Colonias in existence on or before Nov. 9, 1989;

## **Continuing funding through BEIF program, managed through NADB:**

- Offers grant financing exclusively for implementation of high-priority drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects located within 62.13 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border.
- BEIF funds may be used to support projects that serve a single community or regional approaches that serve multiple communities and/or outlying areas

## **Border 2025 competitive grant in response to NADB's "Request for Proposal (RFP):**

- Eligible organizations may submit proposal for an amount up to \$100, 000.00
- Exclusively for implementation of RFP's high-priority drinking water and wastewater projects located within 62.13 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border

# Colonias' Water and Wastewater Challenges



- Lack of access to adequate drinking water service
- Lack of access to Public service of wastewater system
- Areas that have service may have water quality compliance issues i.e., arsenic
- Residents that do not connect wastewater service from the sewer street line into their homes
- Residents that haul water may use inadequate containers that expose water to the elements
- Risk of contamination of water wells from failing septic tanks
- Obstruction to Public & School Buses and in occasions ER-Ambulances caused by flooded / mud streets
- High expenses for purchase of bottled water and for hauling water services
- Other?, xx

# Current Projects by EPA's BEIF, Border2025 and Supporting Organizations



## El Paso County, TX (Hillcrest);

A \$6.9 million first-time drinking water distribution BEIF project that eliminate the need for residents to haul water and the use of on-site 55-gallon storage drums. The project will benefit a population of approximately 520

## Vinton, TX

A BEIF \$7.1 million installation of 36,500 linear feet of PVC pipe, will provide reliable drinking water, fire hydrants, gate valves, master meters to monitor volumes of water purchased from EPWU and service meters for 368 connections to be installed.

## Vado, NM (Sleepy Farms)

The BEIF \$4.5 million project will extend the Doña Ana County wastewater collection system to the community of Sleepy Farms, near Vado, upgrading a Lift Station that conveys wastewater flows to South-Central wastewater treatment facility, reducing risks to waterborne diseases, the potential for groundwater contamination and providing first- time access to wastewater collection services for 30 homes.

## Palmview, TX (AguaSUD)

A BEIF \$6 Million of a \$48.2 Million Total cost, will benefit 8,183 residents with first-time access to Wastewater Connection and Wastewater Treatment services for 1,847 homes, including installation of household connections, decommissioning on-site wastewater disposal systems



## Current projects by EPA's BEIF, Border2025 and by Supporting Organizations

### Rio Grande City, Starr County, TX

Proposed \$12.5 million BEIF Wastewater collection and treatment project that will benefit 22,000 residents with 400 new connections and improvement of 6,000 existing connections.

### El Paso County, TX (Hillcrest Estate, Laura E. Mundy, Serene Acres & Tierra del Oro Colonias)

Plan of El Paso County Commissioners to partner with DIGDEEP.ORG, for water, wastewater services to Count. Funds would be funded by the American Rescue Plan Act plus \$5 million from Dig Deep. Both partners previously worked bringing those services to the Cochran Estate Colonia.

### Rio Grande Valley,

A two-year study of arsenic and other toxic contaminants occurring in residential drinking water in South Texas Colonias, by Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas Inc and Texas A & M University School of Public Health. Project is expected to be completed in 2024.



# Federal & State Programs, and Organizations source of Colonias data information



- EPA Colonia Wastewater Treatment Assistance Program (CWTAP), US-Mexico Border Environmental Program Border 2025, [U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Grant Program | US EPA](#)
- HUD Colonias and Farmworker webpages throughout Border States, <https://search.usa.gov/search?affiliate=housingandurbandevelopment&q=Colonias>
- USDA Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service, [Rural Utilities Service | Rural Development \(usda.gov\)](#)
- County Commissioners Court,
- Others?,

# Federal & State Programs, and Organizations source of Colonias data information, *continue*



- TX Department of Housing and Community Affairs Office of Colonia Initiative/Housing Trust Fund Staff,  
<https://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/oci/index.htm>
- Texas Water Development Board,, Economically Distressed Areas,  
[https://www.twdb.texas.gov/publications/reports/edap\\_reports/doc/Status.pdf](https://www.twdb.texas.gov/publications/reports/edap_reports/doc/Status.pdf)
- TCEQ, Related Web Site on Colonias,  
<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/border/colonias.html>
- TX Attorney General, Colonias Terms,  
<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/divisions/colonias-prevention/colonias-terms>
- New Mexico Finance Authority Colonia Infrastructure Board, [Colonias Infrastructure Board | New Mexico Finance Authority \(nmfinance.com\)](https://www.nmfinance.com)
- NMED Water Quality Control Commission, [WQCC Regulations Standards \(nm.gov\)](https://www.nmed.nm.gov)
- AZ Department of Housing, AZ Designated Colonias, [Arizona Designated Colonia | Arizona Department of Housing \(az.gov\)](https://www.az.gov)
- UofA, Colonias in AZ and New Mexico, [Colonias in Arizona and New Mexico | UAPress](https://www.azcentral.com)
- Texas Law Help Org, <https://texaslawhelp.org/article/colonias-texas#top>
- Others,

# Federal & State Programs, and Organizations source of Colonias data information, *continue*



- A.Y.U.D.A. Inc. – [A.Y.U.D.A. INC - Home | Facebook](#), Adult and Youth United Development Association Inc. (A.Y.U.D.A. Inc.) San Elizario, Texas
- ARAISE.- A Resource In Serving Equality.- <https://www.arisesotex.org/>
- Southeastern New Mexico Economic Development District, [Colonias – Southeastern New Mexico Economic Development District \(snmedd.com\)](#)
- Empowerment Congress of Doña Ana County.- <https://empowernm.org>
- Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South TX, Inc, <https://www.mhm.org/>
- Texas A&M Colonias Program, [Colonias Program - Texas A&M University College of Architecture \(tamu.edu\)](#)
- EPIISO El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization, [El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization \(EPIISO\) / Border Interfaith \(episo-iaf.org\)](#)
- AZ Department of Housing, AZ Designated Colonias, [Arizona Designated Colonia | Arizona Department of Housing \(az.gov\)](#)
- UofA, Colonias in AZ and New Mexico, [Colonias in Arizona and New Mexico | UAPress](#)
- DIGDEEP Org. - <https://www.digdeep.org/> bring clean, hot and cold running water to close water gap once and for all
- Others,